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UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
THE MUSEUM
ANTHROPOLOGICAL PUBLICATIONS
VOL. III **NO. 1**

**EXCAVATIONS ON THE ISLAND
OF PSEIRA, CRETE**

BY

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PHILADELPHIA
PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
1910

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EXCAVATIONS ON THE ISLAND OF PSEIRA, CRETE

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SITE AND THE SEASON'S WORK.

Our attention was first called to the Minoan settlement on the island of Pseira in 1903, when we learned from a Turkish boatman of the existence there of old walls and potsherds. On visiting the spot it was clear that we had to do with a town similar to that at Gournia, but as Mrs. Hawes was then occupied with the excavations at that site, no trial was made until 1906, when, after a short season at Vasiliki, I crossed to Pseira for three days with twenty workmen. The results of these three days were such that it was decided to make Pseira the objective point of the work in 1907.

I was assisted by Mr. B. H. Berry, who remained through the season, and, in addition to the arduous work of making the plan and keeping an illustrated catalogue of the finds, was able to make some pen and ink sketches of the site, one of which is given in Plate II.

Work began on May 13th and continued until July 20th, making only about eight weeks of actual digging owing to the numerous interruptions caused by church holidays. The lack of water was our greatest difficulty, as it had to be brought by boat from springs on the mainland opposite. These springs, one at the Tholos of Kavousi, the other at the foot of some cliffs to the east, rise in holes dug in the sandy beaches, and in rough weather are entirely submerged. Except on one occasion we were able to keep at the excavations a sufficient supply for two days. Aside from this difficulty the men made themselves fairly comfortable in small bush huts, returning to their villages on Saturday nights to lay in their weekly stock of provisions. A small *quasi* cistern of the Roman period lying on the top of the point in the center of the excavations was converted into a temporary kitchen for our own use, tents having been brought over for sleeping purposes.

THE ISLAND.

The island of Pseira is a barren mass of rock rising from the sea at a point some two miles off the coast of Crete opposite the plain of Kavousi. Northwards from Pacheia Ammos a chain of rocky hills bounds the Kavousi

valley on the west, descending in great cliffs into the Gulf of Mirabello. At the Tholos of Kavousi this chain, through some convulsion of nature, has been submerged; the isolated mass of Pseira, however, is beyond doubt a continuation of the same system, and rises abruptly from the sea on the western side. The position of the island is well shown in the sketch plan given in Vol. I, Part 1, page 9, of the *Transactions*.

(The island measures some two miles north and south and at no point is more than a mile in width. The west coast is formed by a line of huge cliffs, which rise sheer from the sea to a height of 800 feet; on the east the land slopes sharply down to the shore. The eastern coast line is indented by three sandy coves separated from one another by tongues of land, the central one of which juts out into the sea for some two hundred yards. On the top and sides of this narrow point and on the adjoining hillside to the south once lay a flourishing Minoan settlement which evidently owed its existence to the excellent harborage for small craft offered by the sheltered cove on the south side of the point. It is exposed solely to the east, and an easterly gale is a thing of rare occurrence in Cretan waters (Plate III).

On the topmost ridge of the island on the edge of the high cliffs on the west lie the remains of a Roman military camp, probably a beacon station connected with similar posts at Kalo Khorio, Pacheia Ammos, the Tholos of Kavousi and on the island of Mochlos, which lies further to the east. Another small group of buildings occupies the center of the Minoan town on the long point before described, but owing to its limited area, this occupation did but little damage to the earlier structures.

Aside from the harbor the island could have offered but little to attract settlers of any sort even in Minoan days. Although numerous terrace walls show that the hillsides were once cultivated, the area was too small and the soil too scanty to attract an agricultural population. The Minoans were preeminently a maritime people, and all their settlements in Eastern Crete point to communities of traders and seamen rather than to a nation of husbandmen. On a coast affording so few places of refuge to sailing craft a good harbor was of primary importance to such settlers, and that the inhabitants of Minoan Pseira owed their extraordinary prosperity to their sheltered port seems very probable. Gournia, which had no harbor, never attained the same wealth or showed such signs of close intercourse with Knossos, the capital city of Crete, although it was probably the local seat of government. Even in the present day the port of the ancient Minoan town is constantly used in case of a sudden gale by the numerous sponge fishermen who work the Cretan waters on their way to and from the Libyan coast.

However much soil may have covered the rocky slopes of the island in Minoan times, in the 3,500 or more years which have passed since the destruction of the town the work of denudation has progressed to such an extent that the greater part of Pseira presents a bare and inhospitable surface. Except for an occasional herd of goats which are left there to feed during the winter months the island is absolutely deserted, and our arrival with eighty men is probably the largest invasion of its solitudes that has taken place since Roman times.

The water supply of the island seems to have been scanty. In the town itself no traces of wells or cisterns have as yet been found, a fact which would lead one to suppose that the townspeople were supplied by springs which have ceased to flow. A tradition exists among the country people on the opposite coast that there was once fresh water on Pseira, but in the present day the only supply is that held in a large cavity of natural rock close to the Roman ruins on the topmost ridge. This cavity is lined with Roman cement, but it must have furnished a precarious and inconvenient water supply, for in summer it would have been dry, and it lay at some distance from the town site. A single well, dating from the Roman or even an earlier period, has been found, sunk in the sand beach of a cove, a little to the north of the town site. It has walls of roughly dressed stones very like the Minoan house walls, and the water level is reached by a flight of eight steps formed of flat slabs. Owing to the general subsidence which is apparent on all this part of the coast, the sea has encroached so near to the well that the water is now brackish. Possibly this is the origin of the tradition about the presence of fresh water on the island. At any rate, the well must have remained open until fairly recent times. No objects have been found in the well itself, which can be assigned to pre-Roman times, but close to its mouth trial trenches have revealed parts of several Minoan houses of various periods and above them Roman remains showing that this cove was occupied in the same manner and at the same periods as the town site itself. *

On the north side of the island the land is level but absolutely destitute of soil, and, as far as can be discovered, bears no traces of early occupation. On several parts of the south and east slopes sherds of Greek pottery, one of the late red-figured style, have been picked up, but so far no remains of a Greek building have come to light, although a thorough examination of the Roman buildings on the ridge and on the point may reveal the existence of Greek remains under their foundations.

A cemetery has been located on the southeast face of the island about half a mile from the town. Thirty-three graves have been opened, but the results are reserved for discussion in another place.

THE TOWN SITE.

The town of Pseira closely resembles the neighboring town excavated at Gournia, as will be seen by the plan (Plate I), but lies more picturesquely, a huddle of streets and houses along the top and sides of a rocky point with long flights of steps descending at irregular intervals to the water's edge. The small harbor lies on the south side of this point and here must have been the old landing place; from the head of this cove two main roads ascend, one on the left to the Late Minoan I houses on the south hill and the other on the right in a long stepway to the top of the rocky point which was the center of the town in all periods (Plate IV). Just below the summit of the hill this stepway branches into four, perhaps five, roads which traverse all parts of the flat hilltop. These roads along the level are never paved, but possess a more or less even floor of natural rock, whereas all the side alleys leading down to the sea have paved stepways, which are well preserved to-day.

* The masonry is all of heavy, sometimes roughly squared blocks of stone, very strongly built in the style usually associated with the Late Minoan I period, but underlying these are many walls of the Middle Minoan I era. These walls are usually of lighter, smaller stones than those used in the upper stratum, although there is little or no means of separating the two periods by their wall construction.¹ There is no use of ashlar masonry on any part of the site and no house that can be compared to the Palace at Gournia, although three of the larger houses described below seem to have been those of important citizens. Unlike the corresponding settlements at Gournia and Vasiliki, bricks seem not to have been used in house construction, and the upper walls as well as many of the floors are entirely of stone. This * fact may be the result of the difficulty in transporting bricks, which would necessarily have been brought from the mainland, but is also due, at least in part, to the abundance of excellent building material ready at hand and requiring but little labor. The island is composed in part of a hard gray limestone, stratified in many places close to the site, in thin layers with softer stone between, so that it can easily be broken off to form excellent building material for the walls of upper stories. For floors a soft slaty stone is used, which covers the hillside at the back of the town and splits into large slabs. In almost every house the upper floor is made of these slabs, which are always found blocking the basement rooms. In some cases, noticeably in the big house of H 12, Room 5 (see Plate I), these floors were still in their approximate positions, as apparently the basements had filled with rubbish before the

¹ Cf. the Early Minoan II and Middle Minoan I houses at Vasiliki, where the heavy outer walls and large bricks generally characteristic of the Late Minoan I period were used.

supporting beams of wood had rotted away, so that the upper floors, level with the thresholds of its rooms, were still clearly visible. Unfortunately the walls of this house, owing to the weight of the massive superstructure, were so thrown out of the perpendicular that all the upper courses had to be removed before the rooms could be cleared.

This universal use of stone accounts for the fragmentary condition of the pottery, of which unbroken specimens were very rare, as the falling in of stone floors and walls caused great destruction to everything except the heavier and coarser objects. The roads, in many places where the walls had fallen outwards, were blocked with masses of stones, the removal of which was the most serious difficulty encountered on the site. The earth, on the other hand, was easily disposed of, as from almost every house the dumping was over the cliffs into the sea below, and thus in two months we were able to clear the unusually large number of rooms shown on the plan.

In the trial dig of 1906 it was seen that Pseira was already a settlement of importance in the Middle Minoan I period; the later excavations have shown that the site was occupied as early as the Early Minoan II epoch. Owing to the uneven surface of the rock on which the earlier foundations were laid many relics of the first houses remained in the subsequent rebuildings of the Middle Minoan III and Late Minoan I periods, for in these rebuildings the walls were not always placed upon a rock foundation, but, where the surface of the natural rock was uneven, the fragments of earlier habitations were left in holes and crevices. The Early Minoan III and Middle Minoan I levels were everywhere closely connected, and in places it was hard to distinguish them. In fact, it would appear that no destruction and general rebuilding took place in these two periods and that one merged gradually into the other with no distinct line of demarcation.

Under the floors of Late Minoan I and Middle Minoan III houses there was in many cases a deposit of Middle Minoan I sherds associated with house walls, and, in these same houses, directly underlying the Middle Minoan I deposits, sometimes mixed with them, were fragments of Early Minoan III vases. From this it would appear that the people of the Middle Minoan I period still used the houses of the preceding period, but usually formed a new floor at a slightly higher level. This close connection between these early periods confirms the belief that they extended over no great space of years; in the Early Minoan II period one already finds the beginnings of a light on dark style of pottery, which is the prevailing Early Minoan III ware and the forerunner of the polychrome vases of the Middle Minoan I period.

The exact extent of the town in the Middle Minoan I era is doubtful, but that it was confined to the point and did not cover its entire area seems probable, as no sherds of the early periods have been found on the south hill or on the north side of the point except at one place in K 11, where a few sherds

and a hoard of obsidian flakes and cores indicated the site of an Early Minoan II or possibly an Early Minoan I building. The place was destroyed in the Middle Minoan I period and not rebuilt until the Middle Minoan III period, when the era of its greatest prosperity began, an era which was continued without interruption until the town was overtaken by the same general catastrophe which destroyed all the settlements in this part of Crete. Unlike Gournia and Palaioakastro, it never recovered from this blow, and after the end of the Late Minoan I period was apparently deserted.

Although the stratification of the earlier periods is interesting, as it confirms the conclusions drawn from other sites, it is to the Late Minoan I period that we must turn for the bulk of the finds and the best preserved houses. On all sites the period of destruction is the one which leaves the richest harvest for the excavator. As long as a site is in continuous occupation the earlier deposits are only the refuse of breakage and objects which have ceased to be of service to their owners. They are thrown into rubbish heaps and used as artificial fillings to make even floors over naturally uneven surfaces. Where, as at Psira, the town was destroyed in the height of its prosperity with no extensive later settlements to disturb its ruins the finds are of course unusually rich. If the town had come to an end with its first destruction in the Middle Minoan I era the same would have been the case with the remains of that period, but, as we have seen, the rebuilding which took place in the Middle Minoan III and Late Minoan I periods destroyed nearly all that remained of the earlier houses. From the end of the Late Minoan I era, however, to which period must be assigned the final catastrophe, no settlers appeared on the site until Roman times, and even then in very small numbers. Their houses occupied a space some 20 by 30 metres square on the top of the point, and probably destroyed only two or three houses of the earlier period.

The Late Minoan I town had increased considerably in size and the overcrowding of the point caused the formation of a new quarter on the hill to the south of the cove, nearly doubling the original area of habitation. The streets, long stepways and heavy well built house walls belong to this period of expansion which came to an untimely end in one of the first upheavals that eventually involved the overthrow of the Cretan maritime supremacy in the Aegean. This uneasy period of invasions and wars of which these destructions of East Cretan towns are the precursors eventually brought about the sack of Knossos, the capital city, and thus dealt a death blow to the Minoan kingdom as a united whole. It is not yet clear whether this was caused by internal wars or by the pressure of the wild tribes of the north, but the fact that these small islands were not resettled shows that the loss of maritime power rendered them unsafe and open to attack by sea. While Crete

still held the control of the Aegean a small island like Pseira was safe enough, and that such a settlement could attain the prosperity shown by the masses of stone vases, the big painted jars (Pl. VII) and the plaster relief (Pl. V) proves that the people of the Late Minoan I period lived in a state of peace and security utterly unprepared to withstand an armed foe. Once the blow had fallen and the sea power was overthrown a small island was too precarious a place for a town, and the survivors of the catastrophe took refuge in some of the neighboring coast settlements which partially recovered their prosperity. On the mainland in case of attack the people could seek refuge in the hills, but on Pseira their only means of flight was by sea, and even this was impossible without long warning of the enemy's approach.

The painted plaster relief and the big painted jars of the "Palace Style" show not only a prosperous community, but one enjoying close communication with Knossos. Moreover, it is important to note that Knossian products are found in contexts which would otherwise have been thought earlier; in other words, Late Minoan II Palace style vases are found in Late Minoan I deposits. Now it is certain that Pseira was never occupied in the Late Minoan II period; accordingly these vases must have been made where the Palace style had already attained a foothold. This would naturally have been Knossos, where this ware first appeared at the end of the Late Minoan I period and soon attained great popularity. Thus while the towns in the east of Crete were still making ware of the Late Minoan I style, stray vases of this later technique had already begun to find their way from Knossos to these remote settlements. No doubt had the destruction occurred a few years later or had there been an immediate resettlement of the town, the Palace style would have been found the prevailing ware as at Palaio-kastro, where such a resettlement actually took place and where the Late Minoan II Palace style can be said to represent a distinct period. On the isthmus, however, the disaster was of too overwhelming a nature to allow an immediate revival, and even at Gournia there was no Late Minoan II period, the rebuilding of the west slope taking place in the Late Minoan III epoch, after the Palace style had degenerated into a highly conventional form. The few Palace style vases from Gournia are, as at Pseira, either foreign to the site or at most an attempt by the local potter to copy designs that he had seen elsewhere. In speaking, then, of the Late Minoan I period at Pseira we must consider that it probably overlaps the Late Minoan II period of Knossos and that the Late Minoan I pottery persisted for a longer time on these small sites than it did at the artistic headquarters of the kingdom, where the new styles must naturally have originated.

THE HOUSES.

Turning to the left from the head of the main stepway in H 8 (see plan), we reach the house in I 5, which is of peculiar interest, as it reproduces on a small scale many of the features of Knossian architecture.

Crossing the threshold, a narrow passage (1) leads into an open space (3). From here one enters a small megaron (2) through a triple doorway supported on two stone bases with the dowel holes for fastening the wooden door posts. In one corner of this megaron is a small rectangular construction divided from the main room by a low partition of upright slabs of greenish schist. A round outlet hole in the paved floor which shows traces of a plaster coating makes it probable that we have here a small bath. As the swallow hole is so large that it was hardly meant to be plugged, the bath was probably never filled, but contained an earthenware vessel from which the water could be poured over the bather. Between this bath and the south wall of the megaron a double door with a stone base for the central post leads into a passage also connecting with the main entrance of the house. Behind the bath a small stone stair leads toward an upper floor which must have contained the principal living rooms. This house is one of the latest additions to the town just before its destruction and belongs to the period when the Palace style of pottery of Knossos was just reaching Eastern Crete, as is shown by fragments of a small jug of this class of imported ware.

Farther along the unexcavated road on which lies the house just described is found another house in J 3. It lies on the summit of the knoll, with rooms terraced down the hill on both sides. It is of the usual type, but peculiar, inasmuch as it overlies a more ancient building, three rooms of which, 1, 2 and 3, were filled with masses of round beach pebbles. This deposit was about 50 centimeters deep and must have been much greater originally, as in building the later house the upper layers had been cut away. The workmen at once recognized these pebbles as sling stones, and it is probable that this was really their use and that the building was a kind of primitive arsenal.¹

Turning down the small alley behind the house with the bath we reach another narrow stepway which leads down to a lower roadway running along the side of the ravine north and south. In G 5 this road crossed the torrent bed to the south hill, where a large part of it has been carried away. All the houses in G. H. 3-7 open on this roadway, and among them one is

¹I am indebted to Dr. Georg Karo for calling my attention to the fact that Mr. Tsountas in his excavations in the Cyclades found round towers filled with similar pebbles which he also considers sling stones (Tsountas, *Εφ. Ἀρχ.* 1899, p. 120). That such weapons were used is shown in the siege scene on the silver vase-fragment from Mycenae (Tsountas and Manatt, *The Mycenaean Age*, p. 213).

especially noticeable for its massive outer walls and huge threshold. In this house, H 4, there were only two narrow basements on the road level (1, 2). Their back walls were formed by a ledge of natural rock, which with the heavy street wall supported the rooms of the upper floor. To these a stone stair ascended from the paved entrance hall, but as the soil at this point was very shallow little could be learned as to size or plan of these upper rooms except that they could also be reached from the back, where a second entrance connected them with the narrow stepway mentioned above.

The only objects found lay in the basements 1 and 2, into which they had fallen when the upper floors gave way. A jar from this hoard shown in Fig. 13, is a good specimen of the local Late Minoan I ware in Eastern Crete. Jars of this sort were very common at Pseira, and several were also found at Gournia. The work as a rule is coarse and the execution of the design careless. White paint for details and added red bands are very noticeable on jars of this class, which, though far from beautiful, hold the eye by their bold design.

The most remarkable features of the domestic architecture of the houses on Pseira are the interior staircases of stone, found in almost every house and best shown in these houses along the south slope. The steepness of the hill and the fact that the light walls of the smaller houses were not strong enough to support a heavy superstructure caused each house to be built in terraces connected by stone stairs leading from one tier of rooms to those on the higher level. Thus a single house would contain a number of floors yet never stand more than two stories high at any one point. Such houses are well shown in the siege scene on the silver vase-fragment from Mycenae; in fact, they can be found to-day in Cretan hill villages which closely resemble in construction their predecessors of Minoan times. In some cases, where the outer walls are built of unusually heavy stones, the superstructure may have been higher, but the general type was a large house climbing the hillside with not more than one floor of living rooms over the basements of each tier.

Returning once more to the head of the main stepway in H 8, which, oddly enough, has no house opening into it from top to bottom, we find the first road on the right leading into the middle of a large building with no distinct threshold or entrance hall. The rooms of this house, which I have called House A, are all of large size, and the presence of a column base in R. 5, very heavy buttresses and thick walls show it possessed important upper floors which opened on another roadway in H 10 at a higher level.

The south part of this house which lies on the edge of the cliff has been broken away, so that its exact extent cannot be determined; moreover, the shallow soil of the upper tier has obliterated all traces of the rooms in that direction. Scattered along the lower road and evidently dropped by plunderers lay five stone vases which speak for the original contents of the house. In quality

*

of stone and finish they are excelled by no other finds of the season, and although little else was found in the house, they show that it must have belonged to a wealthy citizen (Fig. 15 *l m*). This house is rivaled in point of size by only one other (House B in H 12), and both of them are much larger than any of the houses at Gournia excepting, of course, the small palace at that site. This may be explained by saying that Gournia was the seat of the local governor of this part of the ancient Minoan kingdom, although the small town of Psira was the more prosperous of the two. Gournia would certainly have been the more suitable residence for the local official, as it lay on the mainland in what was a populous district in Minoan times, if we may judge from the many remains of that period in the immediate neighborhood.

The second road on the right from the head of the main stepway has not been entirely cleared, but it is plain that just before reaching the entrance of the above mentioned house a branch leads east from it while the main part descends at a slight angle to H 11, where it turns sharply down the hill in a broad stepway paved with massive slabs. At the top of this stepway to the east a very large threshold leads into House B, the largest cleared thus far on the island. Like House A, this appears to have been merely the house of a wealthy citizen, and in plan and construction differs in no way from its humbler neighbors. Its large size and important upper floors required massive walls of large stones, which in some places were preserved to a height of three metres. Like the smaller houses, this also climbed the hill in tiers, of which we can count four reaching from the water's edge to the summit of the point.

The outer wall facing the road is built of roughly squared blocks of stone approaching ashlar masonry. From the threshold one enters a paved ante-room or entrance hall (2), and this connects in turn with the rooms lying over the deep basements of the second tier (5, 7). From the north side of this entrance hall a narrow stone stair ascends to the third tier of rooms, in only one of which (4) were any objects found. From room No. 3 of this tier another stair leads to the rooms of the fourth and last tier lying on the actual hilltop, but the soil at this point was so shallow and had been so disturbed in Roman times that no trace of their plan remains. The first tier, close to the water's edge, was also very much destroyed, and its walls were so thrown out of perpendicular by the weight of earth above that the few that remained collapsed as soon as cleared. Like the entrance hall, the rooms on the same level with it over the basements of the second tier were all paved with large slabs, some nearly a metre square. In Room 5 this paved floor was still in its approximate position, the basement having filled with debris before the supports of the upper floor had given way.

From various parts of this house came the best finds of the season, chiefly

of vases and stone lamps, but, judging from the fragments scattered about the rooms, they represented but a small part of its original contents. The road outside the main entrance was filled with hundreds of fragments of fine painted cups and vases, which seemed to have been thrown out at the time the place was sacked. This sack must have been carried out thoroughly, as no metal or any small portable objects were left behind. The pottery seemed to have been wantonly destroyed; parts of the same vase were found scattered through various rooms of the house as though they had been broken and then kicked about the floors. Parts of the stone lamp (Fig. 19) were found in Rooms 4, 5 and 7, while the bottle in Fig. 8 came from Rooms 7, 8 and 9.

On the north side of the hilltop in J, K, 11-15, were a number of rooms which belonged to a row of houses standing along the edge of the cliffs. The easternmost of these houses are not clearly distinguishable one from another owing to Roman foundation walls which were sunk into their deposits and also to the fact that the greater part of each house, because of the corrosion of the cliffs, has slipped into the sea.

In J 13 we find the probable continuation of one of the roads starting east from the head of the main stepway so often referred to. Immediately on the left of this road lie the walls of a small but well built house, J, K, 12. The main entrance leading into R. 4 is reached from a small alley which turns off the main road on the left. Room 4 lay on the upper floor over a low basement, and owing to the sharp slope of the ground at this point is on the same level as the ground floor room or court marked No. 1, which lies higher up the hillside. Room 1 seems to have been a small paved court with a sort of portico across the north side which led to the rooms entered from the street 2 and 4. In the narrow portico, evidently fallen from an upper floor, were parts of a plaster relief representing a Minoan queen or goddess in a richly embroidered dress. Because of the shallow soil at this point the surviving fragments were very rotten, and only those in fullest relief had withstood the action of time. These include one breast, arms and part of the skirt, which are shown in Pl. V, where a conjectural restoration of the bust has been attempted. Aside from this relief the house was a singularly empty one, probably because it was more carefully plundered than its neighbors. The few potsherds found all belong to the Late Minoan I period, which lingered on here after the Late Minoan II Palace style, with its great frescoes and reliefs, had already commenced at Knossos.

Further along the ridge in I, 14, 15 another large house (D) has been partially cleared. In size it rivals the two neighboring houses already described, and, judging from the objects found, was an equally rich one. The heavy walls and massive buttresses again indicate important upper floors. One of the basements, 2, was lighted by a window and used as a storeroom. Both

2 and 5 have paved floors and connect with the rooms behind by a doorway. In 5 nine large jars were found standing in a row along the south wall of the room on each side of the doorway. All except two were painted with bands of poor dark paint, but these two belong to a very different class. One is shown in Fig. 9 and the other is quite like it except for a difference in the rim. It is hard to explain the presence of such jars in a narrow dark store-room, where the plain unpainted jar would have fulfilled the same purpose. Possibly they were hidden there among the others on the chance that they might be overlooked by the spoilers.

Apparently these rooms, 2, 3, 5, were the result of a rebuilding of this part of the house on a more regular plan, as the very irregular range of rooms in I 15 belongs to the same building. In a corner of 1 is a curious semicircular construction of solid masonry exactly similar to one found in a room of the Palace at Gournia. At about 1.50 m. from the ground the outer circle of masonry ends, making a shelf about .30 m. broad, while the central core rises about .30 m. higher, making a second shelf or platform in the corner. From its resemblance to the fireplaces seen to-day in many of the Cretan inns, this was probably its use, although no traces of fire were found.

Of the other houses which lie still farther along the point little can be said except that they repeat the usual features of these small Minoan dwellings and contained no objects of especial interest.

In I 16 two more roads were found leading up towards the summit of the hill, and it is clear that the houses extended to the very end of the point, which has evidently subsided to a considerable degree. Many of the houses are now drenched by spray in a heavy storm, and others still lower on the rock at the end of the point have been almost completely swept away by the action of the waves.

THE POTTERY.

THE EARLY MINOAN PERIOD.

EARLY MINOAN I.

Of the Early Minoan I period there are no traces on the point excepting a large hoard of obsidian cores and flakes associated with early potsherds in K 11, R. 1. These sherds are of coarse gritty clay, black or brown, and very highly burnished. One piece of a cover and a cup with suspension handles have a very early look, although they might equally well belong to the first part of the succeeding period.

EARLY MINOAN II.

Almost all the rock crevices on the hill were filled with fragments of this period, both the mottled red and black and the dark on light geometric techniques being represented. Under the floor of Room 4 in House A a large deposit of this period came to light, including a perfect jug of the mottled style and a side-spouted jar of the common Vasiliki type (*Trans.*, Vol. I, Part III, Pl. XXXIV, Nos. 6 and 7), with a geometrical design in white, showing the influence of the succeeding period. The wares of this period are not essentially different from those found at Vasiliki in 1904 and 1906, and as no new shapes or styles occurred, they do not require any further description.

The stratification, where it could be recognized, carried out what had already been noted at Vasiliki and elsewhere, that the dark on light geometric ware lay immediately beneath the light on dark Early Minoan III pottery, while the mottled technique was found in both deposits, though to a far lesser degree in the latter.

EARLY MINOAN III.

The town which occupied a small area during the preceding period now attained considerable size. The principal deposits of this ware came from rock crevices under the Late Minoan I floors in G 6 and on the summit of



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

the point H. 4, where the Later Minoan I walls did not reach the underlying strata owing to the depth of soil. No remains of this period have as yet been found under the Late Minoan I houses on the south hill.

Judging from the masses of sherds in some of the rock holes this period was a long one, merging gradually into the Middle Minoan I period with no distinct line of separation such as marks the end of the Middle Minoan I and Late Minoan I periods on this site. In many cases the Early Minoan III and Middle Minoan I deposits were very much confused, and a certain type of cup (Figs. 1 and 2) seemed to form a connecting link between the two and occurred

with the remains of both periods. This type did not appear in the Early Minoan III deposits of Vasiliki, where decorated cups of this shape were always without handles, but was found at Palaikastro (*B. S. A.* XI, p. 271, Fig. 5d), in Middle Minoan I deposits; moreover, several undecorated cups of this type came from the Middle Minoan I house B at Vasiliki. On the other hand, this same type occurred in several undoubtedly Early Minoan III graves in the cemetery. These cups are occasionally decorated with a festoon in red paint, thus foreshadowing the Middle Minoan I polychrome style. The appearance of this type of cup in both periods emphasizes the close connection between them uninterrupted by any overwhelming disaster.

THE MIDDLE MINOAN PERIOD.

MIDDLE MINOAN I.

The soil in I 6 was unusually deep owing to the gradual slope of the hill at this point, and it was soon evident that the Late Minoan I floors were not laid on a rock foundation. Below these floors the walls of



Fig. 3.

an earlier Middle Minoan I house were found. It was orientated like the later house, and in many cases the Late Minoan I walls were laid on the top of those of the earlier building. Unfortunately at certain points this was not the case, and the Late Minoan I builders had sunk their foundations deep into the Middle Minoan I deposits. Owing to this fact almost no objects were found entire, but that the original house would have proved a rich one was shown by the parts of nine stone vases and many more in clay. Three of the stone vases were found entire, one of which is shown in Fig. 15, and is a typical example of the low open bowl so much in vogue in this period.

The other fragmentary vases were, with one exception, parts of similar bowls of various sizes, the exception being a cup in fine gray veined limestone with a trefoil spout. More important is the jug shown in Fig. 3. Its uptilted spout recalls some of the Early Minoan III shapes and the white design on a dark ground shows the simple beginnings of a curvilinear style but little removed from the methods of Early Minoan III decoration.

Together with this jug were several large jars and covers representing the Middle Minoan I dark on light style, which was commonly used for all the larger, coarser vessels. This ware, three examples of which are shown in Fig. 4, is always characterized by its buff clay and bold designs in slightly lustrous dark paint. The clay in the larger vessels is generally coarse, but in the small vases the designs are painted on a smooth buff slip which sometimes shows signs of polishing. The favorite designs are parallel sets of oblique lines running from the neck to the base of the vase, large scrolls like a running spiral pattern with the spirals filled in, and rectilinear designs



Fig. 4.

like those on the vases of this class found at Vasiliki (*Trans.*, II, 2, p. 128, Figs. 11 and 12).

Some of the smaller vases with the polished buff slip and geometrical dark on light designs closely resemble the ware in use at the beginning of the Early Minoan II period, when the mottled technique is still in its earliest stages. The cups shown in Plate VI *a* and *b* came from H. 3, R. 3, and belong to this class except that here we have an added white paint, so combining both the dark on light and light on dark styles. The thinness and fine quality of the clay is very unusual in the dark on light wares of this period and shows that this style of decoration was sometimes used for vases of the better class. The other vessels from this deposit included a number of black glaze cups with festoons of white paint on the rim like those which characterized House B. at Vasiliki and which have also been found at Palaikastro in the same context; also a small black glaze cup with a white fish, a design common in this period. (*Trans.*, Vol. I, Part III, p. 189, Fig. 6, II^c.) (*Id.*, II, 2, Pl. XXX *b*.)

Under the Late Minoan I floor in G. 7, R. 2, was found the curious vase shown in Fig. 5. As the deposit was characterized by masses of

Middle Minoan I cup fragments, there can be no doubt but that this vase belonged to the same period. The exaggerated shape and the large size of the vessel show that the Middle Minoan I era was by no means a primitive period and that no great transition was required to produce the exquisite polychrome pottery of Knossos with their curious shapes. In the case of this vase the shape was the principal consideration, and to emphasize it no decoration which could distract the eye was employed, half the body being painted with chalky white, the other half black. That the shape was derived from a metal prototype is shown by the clay rivet on the vertical handle, and though a metal vase of this shape may have had an especial use, its copy in clay was hardly practical but merely an example of the potter's skill.

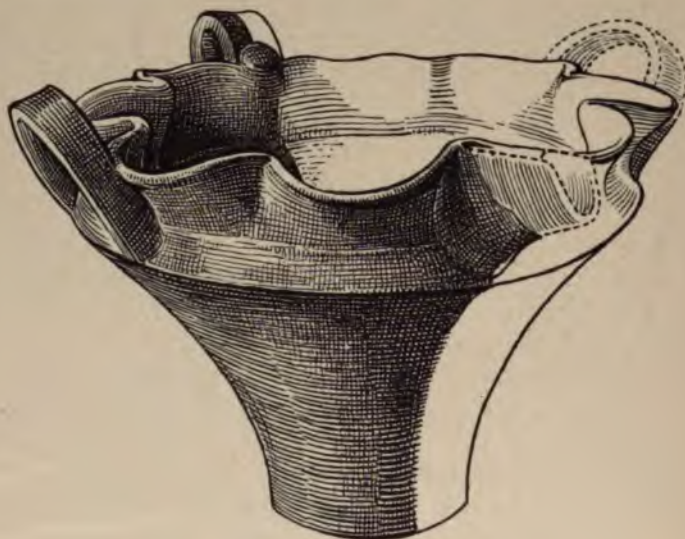


Fig. 5.

MIDDLE MINOAN III.

That the resettlement of the island took place near the end of the Middle Minoan period seems clear from extensive rubbish heaps found among the Late Minoan I houses of a kind of ware which immediately precedes the typical Late Minoan I style of pottery. This ware is of very fine quality and in it we see that the dark on light designs of the succeeding period already predominate over the old Middle Minoan I light on dark style. The light on dark technique is in a decided minority and consists usually of a monochrome white design on a dark ground. The dark on light style is confined almost entirely to variations of the ripple motive, with no sign of the naturalistic plant designs

so much in vogue in the Middle Minoan III and Late Minoan I periods. The vases are usually hole-mouthed jugs and low open bowls, the latter of which commonly have the ripple both inside and out, also a similar style made of broad wavy brush marks. White paint is sometimes used for details on broad dark bands, but there is no trace of the Late Minoan I red. This style of pottery may be said to occupy an intermediate stage between the true Middle Minoan III ware of Knossos and the typical Late Minoan I fabrics, and cannot truly be said to belong to either class. As true Middle Minoan III pottery has not been found so far on any of the sites in this neighborhood, I have called this ware by that name to distinguish it from the later Late Minoan I wares of which it is the forerunner. The deposits of this style were all very fragmentary, no vases entire and none that could be made up from fragments. The evidence shows that it was a period of resettlement and merged into the Late Minoan I period very shortly afterwards, when the town was entirely rebuilt.

THE LATE MINOAN PERIOD.

LATE MINOAN I.

The Late Minoan I local pottery of Pseira presents much the same characteristics as that of Gournia, which is to say the prevailing designs are drawn from plant life or from marine objects. The ripple design, which, as I have said, attained such great popularity in the Middle Minoan III period, did not easily die out, and on some of the best Late Minoan I vases we find it occurring combined with designs typical of that period (Fig. 6). The use of white paint for details begins at the end of the Middle Minoan III period and later a chalky red is introduced for the same purpose. The monochrome light on dark Middle Minoan III style persists in many black glaze cups with a design in white around the rim. Of these cups the commonest type is straight sided with a slightly flaring rim encircled by a band of very stiff and regular white spirals.¹

For the Middle Minoan III ripple vases a very fine buff slip had been revived, which recalls the polished buff slips of Early Minoan II and Middle Minoan I vases, except that the new slip possessed a harder surface and presented a more brilliant appearance. The use of the slip increased to such an extent in the Late Minoan I period that it is unusual to find a decorated vase without it. The paint used is in itself very lustrous and when combined with the polished slip gives to the surface of the Late Minoan I vases, where well preserved, a finish unequaled by the ware of any of

¹ Cf. *Gournia*, Plate VI, Fig. 35.

the preceding periods. On all large jars which are of coarse gritty clay this slip was valuable to give a smooth surface for the painted design, although it was not universally used, for a thin buff wash was sometimes substituted. The jars with this buff wash are always of an inferior sort, decorated with either plain bands or coarse plant designs in very lustrous paint.

Another type is occasionally found which recalls the Middle Minoan I period and in a lesser degree the polished dark subneolithic ware of Early



Fig. 6.

Minoan II. These are cups and jugs of dark gray clay of fine quality covered with a shiny black varnish which peels away from the surface very easily. This is an archaistic revival of an older style and is sometimes noticed in Middle Minoan I vases, although it does not appear to have ever become popular, judging from the few examples found. Small jars were very frequently found with crude flowers, usually a lily, incised when the clay was still moist in place of a painted design.

Another archaism is found on several clay bulls from the town, which are covered with a chalky white slip, over which is painted a harness in either

an orange red or purple (Fig. 7). This technique occurs occasionally in the Middle Minoan I period, but in the Late Minoan I period was probably confined to these bulls; at least I do not know of its use on any vases of the period. That a white bull was the favorite sacrificial victim seems clear, and the custom that the votive-offering should also be white necessitated the use of this otherwise uncommon white slip.

One of the most curious facts about the finds of this period was the widely scattered condition of broken objects. In many cases broken vases and stone

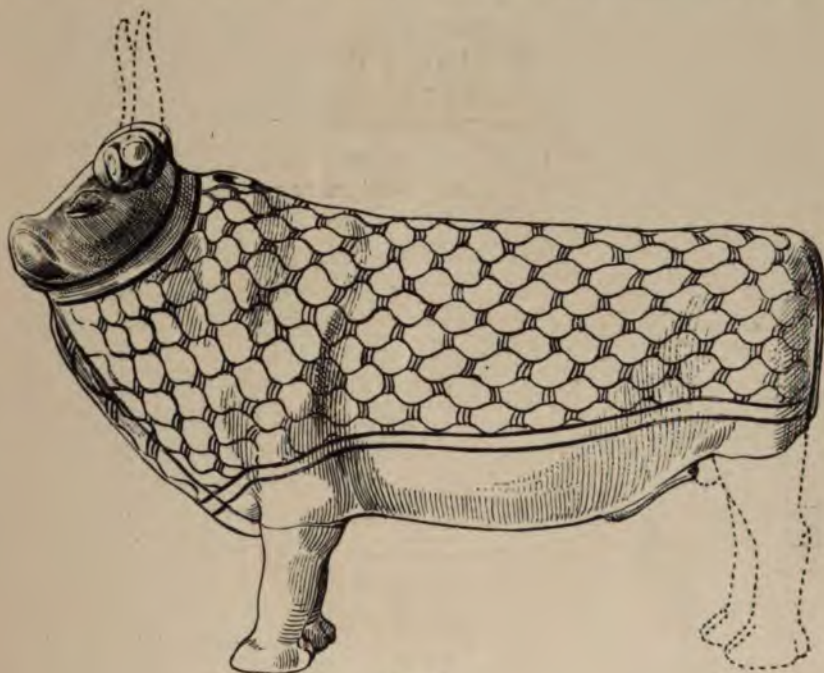


Fig. 7.

vessels were found piece by piece in various rooms of the same house and sometimes scattered over even a larger area. One small lamp (Fig. 18) was found in H. 12, R. 8, early in the season, and on the last day its handle turned up in I. 14, R. 5. When we remember that the upper walls of most of the houses were of stone as well as their floors, this is not so surprising, as the destruction probably left many houses standing in a partly ruined condition and accessible to any wanderers who might return to the site. Thus in many cases parts of a vase may have been picked up, carried a little distance and dropped again if something else was found of greater value. Clay vases, as we have said, must have been knocked off from shelves when the house was sacked and their fragments scattered about the

rooms as too bulky and worthless a form of plunder. The sack, combined with the falling in of so many stone walls and floors, left very few vases entire, although the large jars, which were heavy and not easily overturned, were unusually complete.

As is always the case on these town sites, many houses were entirely empty, and the finds of clay vases came from certain large deposits which by some chance escaped utter destruction. Dealing with these deposits first, there are in all fifteen vases, for the most part cups and bowls, which come from D. 5, R. 1, a new house of which only part of one room has been opened up. This room was filled with thousands of finely decorated Late Minoan I sherds, from which the above mentioned vases were put together. Twelve baskets of painted potsherds and as many again of coarser vessels represent the breakage of an enormous mass of pottery which must have formed the stock of a dealer. These vases, though good examples of their class, present no new features, the designs being for the most part plant wreaths and similar motives.

The next deposit in House A. would seem to have fallen into a basement room under the entrance hall, where we find the threshold opening off the upper road—H. 10, R. 1. The two best vases from this deposit are shown in Fig. 6 and Pl. VI c. One, the tall amphora (Fig. 6) with the ripple and plant motives, is a shape more characteristic of the preceding than of the Late Minoan I period, but the designs and the use of white paint for the details show it must be classed early in this period. The other vase (Pl. VI c) is a very good example of the Late Minoan I style at its best. The influence of the Middle Minoan light on dark technique is still very strong, as shown by the ivy pattern in white on the central band, while the ivy leaves with spiral volutes are very typical of the period to which the vase belongs. A clay bull similar to the one in Fig. 7 was found with the vases and is painted in a way already described, with an orange harness over the white body slip. Three such bulls were found entire or nearly so, also parts of three others. All but one of these bulls appear to have been made from the same mould, probably turned out by the local potter for votive-offerings, or, as Mr. Dawkins suggests (*B. S. A.*, Vol. XI, p. 287), as a cheap substitute for sacrifice used by the townspeople in their religious ceremonies. It seems probable that each household had its own little shrine, for Gournia is the only place where a town shrine has been discovered. In the poorer houses these shrines must have been of the simplest type with accessory cult objects of a perishable character, but in houses of the better class on several sites what appear to have been the remains of domestic shrines have been found (*B. S. A.*, Vol. X, p. 216).² In House B. R. 4 parts of a

²At Palaikastro there seems to have been a Minoan shrine on the site of the later temple of Dictæan Zeus which may be a town shrine such as the one at Gournia (*B. S. A.*, Vol. XI, p. 287).

large clay bull's head were found and nearby a narrow ledge of small beach pebbles which may have served such a use, as the late shrine in the palace of



Fig. 8.

Knossos shows that such beach pebbles were employed for altars. Near this ledge was found a triton shell cut out inside to form a vessel, and this again

recalls a Knossian shrine, for in the Middle Minoan III shrine of the Snake Goddess shells were associated with cult objects. At Psira a number of such shells have been found, in different houses, usually cut out inside in the way just described, and evidence points to the fact that shells of all sorts were associated in some way with Minoan ritual.

To return to the pottery once more, some of the best finds of the year were made in House B. and in every case had fallen into the deep basements from the rooms of the upper floors. The flask or filler of Fig. 8 comes from this house and is one of the class of vessels showing strong influences of the Late Minoan II Palace style. The motive is evidently that of the date palm, and although the stiff architectural style of the full Palace period is lacking, it needs only a step, and an easy one at that, to produce the splendid Palace style jars of Knossos with the lotus and papyrus designs. The design on the neck is quite unlike the true Late Minoan I style; moreover, this shape of bottle filler seems not to have made its appearance until the end of the Late Minoan I period, when it attains popularity almost to the exclusion of the conical straight sided filler. This straight sided shape survives in the Late Minoan III period after the bottle style has disappeared with the end of the Late Minoan II pottery.

The only other vase from this house (R. 1) which is in any way remarkable is the large jar shown in Plate VII, which is, without doubt, one of the finest examples of the Late Minoan I period that has been found thus far in Crete. The profuse use of white paint for the details, the presence of chalky red band on the rim prove that it belongs to the Late Minoan I style at the last stage of its development. The design of bulls' heads and double axes is itself conventionally treated, but such designs in which sacred emblems play an important part do not lend themselves easily to naturalistic treatment. It is in the olive sprays that fill the spaces between the stiff heads that we see the love of naturalism which characterizes the artist of this period, and in this case they help to lighten the heaviness of the whole design. The lower zones of decoration are splendid examples of the various types of spirals, ivy leaves and plant rosettes with which the Late Minoan I potters loved to cover their vases, and which one meets again and again on every class of ware from the end of the Middle Minoan III to the beginning of the Late Minoan II period. From the profuse use of the double axe motive it is probable that this jar was reserved for some ritual use. The double axe appears on the top and sides of the rim, on the shoulder between the horns and heads of the bulls, and on the base, and even the handles take their form from the same cult object. The large axes on the shoulder bear on their blades the same designs worked in white paint that occur so often on the axes figured on seal stones and in scenes of ritual worship, and must be taken to represent the actual

manner in which the original objects themselves were decorated. It is possible that these details in white may stand for the exact reproductions in a paint medium of metal axes inlaid with silver wire, an art not unknown to the Minoan goldsmiths. The rim is very deeply undercut and pierced with a row of small holes through which a coarse needle could be passed to sew on cloth covering over the top of the jar, so as to exclude all dust from defiling the contents. It may be that the jar was used for holding oil or some other liquid sacred to the gods, in which case this cover would keep the contents pure, whereas an earthenware cover would never fit closely enough to exclude dust from sifting in. The splendid results obtained by the Late Minoan I polished slip are well shown here where the rather coarse clay is covered by a heavy coat of finer clay so polished that no sign is visible of the rough material of which the vase is formed. The bulls' heads are painted in dark glaze with harness of white, which rather contradicts the theory that the bull most acceptable to the divinities should be white, but in this case a white head on the light buff slip would have been nearly invisible, and a light design on a light ground would, as far as we know, have been contrary to all Minoan traditions of vase painting. The white harness is also a divergence from the usual harness of orange red, but it seems that here the exigencies of the case obliged the artist to adopt new methods more suitable to his background on which his designs must of necessity be in dark glaze. With this vase we reach the highest stage of development in Late Minoan I ceramic art, which in point of paint, glaze and slip is unsurpassed by either earlier or later wares in Minoan Crete.

The bull's head before mentioned came also from this house, but, unfortunately, the greater part of it is missing. This head is rather larger than those from other sites and has the greater part of one of the horns intact, which, as a rule, are lacking on the other heads. Like the clay bulls from other parts of the site, it is covered with a chalky white slip. The closed neck shows that it was never attached to a body.

The next vase deposit to be described was found in House D, in the two basement rooms 2 and 5. In R. 5, among a number of small pithoi, was found the jar of Fig. 9. Another larger one, an exact duplicate except for the rim, was found with it, and seemed to have been filled with some very fine plaster. These two jars were standing, as stated above, p. 14, together with seven coarser ones of a very inferior quality. Their original use must have been a purely decorative one, as their very slender base and heavy rim render them a very unsafe receptacle for any material.

The most curious feature of the jar in Fig. 9 is the moulded rim. Dr. Mackenzie tells me that fragments of such rims have been found at Knossos, and I believe they have appeared at Phaistos also; but no one has had any very clear idea as to what sort of vessels they came from. The body is of

coarse clay covered with the usual polished buff slip, except around the rim, where the same chalky white already noticed on the bulls has been employed.



Fig. 9.

The whole body of the jar except for a zone near the base is covered with a network of connected spirals in dark glaze picked out with white dots. The

lower zone, separated from the rest by dark bands, is decorated with a row of loose spirals. The background is filled in with dark glaze, leaving the pattern in the natural buff of the clay, a method new to these sites on the isthmus. The



Fig. 10.

network of spirals forcibly recalls certain architectural designs, and is in all probability a potter's adaptation of designs from the walls and ceilings of the great Minoan palaces. The jar has the look of having been copied from a metal original, and one can well imagine such a metal jar with the curious rim and spiral net in repoussé, the white dots inlaid with silver.

In G. 7, R. 1, which was cleared in the three days' trial made on the site in 1906, were found a splendid set of vases, three of which are shown in Figs. 10 and 11 and 12. Like the flask of Fig. 8 they might be classed as Late Minoan II were it not for the undoubted Late Minoan I character of all the objects associated with them. The flask or bottle filler with the dolphins, Fig. 10, was found lying partly inside one of the earlier conical fillers of which Gournia furnished such fine specimens in 1903. The old Middle Minoan I design of the fish again appears here, but the treatment is now rather more realistic, as the dolphins in this case are enmeshed in a net which covers the body of the vase. The design at once recalls the large fresco of dolphins from Knossos, so that again, as in the jar of Fig. 9, we find the potters copying designs from the walls of the Cretan palaces—in this case not so well adapted to their humble craft.



Fig. 11.

The jar in Fig. 11 looks as though it belonged to the end of the Late Minoan II rather than to the end of the Late Minoan I period, the small barred stop-gaps between the curls of the volute being a design very common in the gold work of the last Minoan period (Evans, *Prehistoric Tombs*, p. 130, Fig. 119, No. 75a). The whole design is highly conventionalized and shows that wherever these vases were made the Palace style was already at an advanced stage of its development.

That these vases also represent a style foreign to the small Minoan towns on the Isthmus of Hierapetra is quite clear, as the clay, technique and whole

appearance of the vessels are utterly different from those of the local fabrics. The Zakro filler (*J. H. S.*, XXII, p. 333, and Plate XII), the set of fillers from Palaiokastros (*B. S. A.*, Vol. IX, p. 311, Figs. 9 and 10), all belong to this class; similar also though of slightly earlier date is the fine octopus "bügelkanne," from Gournia (*Gournia*, Pl. H). At Melos also fragments of vases of this class came to light, and these were also regarded as imported fabrics probably from Crete (*Phylakopi*, p. 265, and Plate XXXI, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5).

In regard to these fillers which certainly served in religious ceremonies, it is a curious fact that they very seldom occur singly, but always in hoards. In this room were parts of five, a cover decorated with double axes, the basket-shaped vase of Fig. 12 and one of the clay bulls, Pl. IX. At Gournia a number of fillers were found with a bull's head in clay and several vases of curious shape in a small house on the east slope. At Palaiokastros the same



Fig. 12.

thing occurred, so that we may perhaps conclude that each small town possessed a supply of these vessels, which were the property of the village priest and kept in his house.

The basket-shaped vase of Fig. 12 may not be as late as it looks, owing to the character of the design, which does not admit of much freedom of

treatment. The curious shape and the abundant use of the double axe show that this vase was probably intended for ritual use.

Another vase closely related to this group from G. 7, R. 1, was found in I. 3, R. 1. It is a very good example of the use made of marine designs, the nautilus, seaweed and rockwork adapting themselves extremely well to vase decoration. The shape of this vase again betrays a metal prototype as shown by the handle where the metal rivet fastening it to the body of the vase has been reproduced in clay.

In J. 12, R. 1, there were found, as stated above, parts of a large plaster relief, evidently that of a woman, if we may judge by her richly embroidered dress and the conventional white color of the skin. The restoration shown in Pl. V combines most of the remaining parts and, except for the left arm, may be considered correct. This left arm may have belonged to another figure, although the other fragments show no signs of the existence of a second relief. The plaster was in so rotten a state that the greater part of the surface had disintegrated beyond hope of recovery; but enough remains to give a vivid idea of the rich character of the dress. The colors are blue, white



Fig. 13.

and yellow, the first two predominating. The work is very delicate and the smallest details are drawn with a care that even now must excite admiration. As is often the case in these Minoan reliefs, the skirt and bust are the parts in highest relief, while the head was not in relief at all, but painted on the flat surface, no fragment of which remains. As in the pottery, we find

in Minoan embroidery many of the designs employed in architectural decoration. The border of rosettes on the left sleeve is a design of this sort which



Fig. 14.

also occurs in the jewelry of the later periods (Evans, *Prehistoric Tombs*, p. 130, Fig. 119, No. 66a).

Unfortunately, the work on the bodice has almost disappeared, but enough is left to show that the form was of the usual décolleté type affected by Minoan ladies, which left the breasts exposed. Around her neck are two necklaces. The upper one, from its yellow color, must have been of large gold beads, with festoons of smaller beads hanging from a string of crescent shaped gold bars. The second necklace, which hangs much lower on the bosom, is blue, and no doubt is intended to represent a string of blue porcelain beads, which are often found in Minoan graves of all periods. These reliefs, in gesso duro, have always been found at Knossos associated with the remains of the later Palace, and have been classed as belonging to the Late Minoan II period. Neither at Gournia nor at Palaikastro were there any traces of such reliefs, and even the rulers of Phaistos and Hagia Triada seem to have contented themselves with fresco painting on a flat surface. That such a thing should have come to light in the ruins of a small town on a barren island is a matter of no small astonishment, and strengthens the idea that this must have been a settlement in close connection with the center of Minoan civilization.

THE STONE VASES.

The fragmentary condition of the pottery on this site was more than made up for by the enormous numbers of stone vases and lamps from all parts of the town. In all they amounted to about eighty-five objects. Hitherto thirty or even twenty stone vases in good condition had been considered a fair output for one season, but here, for some reason, the plunderers left the entire accumulation behind them, with the result that Pseira, from the town and cemetery combined, produced the huge total of 150 stone vases and lamps, of which the majority were in an excellent state of preservation.

Any classification of these vases into distinctive periods is impossible, for, excepting the stone lamps and cup, we find that almost every type of vase found in the Late Minoan I houses has its origin as far back as the Middle Minoan I, or even an earlier period.

The fact of their durability and the labor required to make even a small vase makes it probable that they were in most cases handed down from one generation to another, and the occurrence of a stone vessel in a Late Minoan I deposit gives not the slightest clue as to the date of its manufacture. We know that Pseira, as a town, underwent complete destruction in the Middle Minoan I era, and was not occupied again until the Middle Minoan III period. Therefore, unless the returning settlers brought many stone vases with them, we might assign those found in the Late Minoan I houses to that date. But that these people arrived empty handed, with no goods or chattels, is highly improbable, so that it is best to describe the objects without assigning them

to any definite period except in the case of the larger lamps and the stone goblet. Of these lamps three are of the pedestal type, Fig. 15 *d*, and four others with equally large basins stand on only a short foot. All these are



Fig. 15.

of steatite and each has cuttings for two wicks. In addition to these, which are all in a fair state of preservation, a number of pedestals were found from which the lamp basin had been broken away. Several of the lamps on a short foot had the base roughly trimmed, and it seems probable that they were all originally of the pedestal type, but, having been broken off, still continued to be used, the broken base being thrown away as valueless.

Of the small lamps nine are of black steatite, three in reddish limestone

and two in pale green steatite of fine quality. One of the red stone lamps, from House B, is shown in Fig. 17, and is a fine example of its class. The collar of drooping leaves is a design which is characteristic of Late Minoan II art.

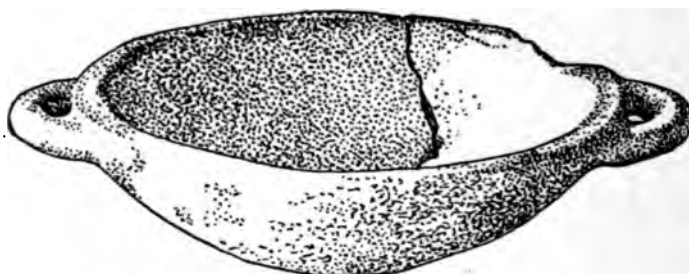


Fig. 16.

Fig. 15 gives the main types of small lamps and vases from the site. Although I know of no pedestal lamps earlier than the Middle Minoan I period, the short type of large lamp certainly occurs earlier, for in the Middle Minoan I House A at Vasiliki, five of this kind were found in 1906, but so rotted that it was impossible to preserve them. Of the smaller lamps, Fig. 15 *d* certainly belongs to the Late Minoan I period, as the collar of leaves never occurs before that date. The vase *c*, in the same figure, belongs to a class of vessels which were found in the Koumasa tombs in great numbers and should be assigned to at least the Early Minoan II period. Of the "blossom" bowls, two types, *j* and *k*, were found; of these, *j* is probably the earlier, although *k* occurs as far back as the Middle Minoan I era. With the type of *k* the period is indicated by the profile, for the earliest examples have a curving outline, while in those of the Late Minoan I class the shoulder is higher and the outline more angular. The type *i* is common in the deposits of all periods from the Middle Minoan I to the Late Minoan I period. The large bowl, Fig. 16, is a typical Middle Minoan shape and comes from a house of that date. I do not know of its ever occurring in Late Minoan I deposits, although in the Middle Minoan I houses it is the type most commonly found.

The vase shown in Fig. 15 *m*, from the road outside House A, closely resembles in shape the famous warrior cup from Hagia Triada. A hammer head in gray veined marble is a type already known by examples from Palaioikastro (*B. S. A.*, Vol. XI, p. 279), and from Hagia Triada (*Mon. Ant.*, XIV, p. 56, Fig. 26). These hammer heads could not have been intended for actual use as such, owing to the fine quality of the stone and the fact that they so seldom show signs of wear.

In Fig. 15 *h* and *l* are shown two large steatite vessels, the first from the road by House A, the other from House B, R. 9; of these the second resem-

bles a cooking pot of the present day, while the other is a shape which recalls the much earlier painted pots so common in the Early Minoan III epoch, although it is not likely to be of that date, owing to the fine quality of the



Fig. 17.

steatite. The black steatite in use in the earlier period is, as a rule, very poor in quality and quite inferior to that used for the better class of Late Minoan I stone vases.

The best of the stone vases found at Pseira is the splendid vessel shown in Plate VIII, which exactly duplicates one found at Knossos (*B. S. A.*, Vol. VI, 1899-1900, p. 30). The stone is a species of breccia of very hard quality, which occurs in large masses close to the site, possibly indicating that the vase



Fig. 18.

was made in the town. The house in which it was found, D. 5, R. 1, on the south hill, was characteristic of the Late Minoan I era, which would place this vase in that period, while those of Knossos were assigned to the Late Minoan II period. Just below the carved rim the vase is pierced on each side by two small holes, which were probably used for suspending it by means of cords when it was not in use.

In the big house B parts of three delicate cups of white marble were

found of the type of Pl. X *d*, and also two fragments of a marble plaque on which can be seen rows of ashlar masonry, evidently the walls of a large building. From the curiously irregular shape of this plaque, of which no two sides are of the same length, we conclude that it must have been part of a mosaic representing some sort of scene with buildings in the background.

The only remaining object which presents any new features is the pretty lamp of Fig. 19, which comes from House B, Rooms 4, 5 and 7. It is of the finest quality of brownish steatite and repeats the idea of the "blossom" bowls, only here the flower is open instead of partly closed, as is usually the case. The workmanship is excellent, the carving in very sharp relief, and,

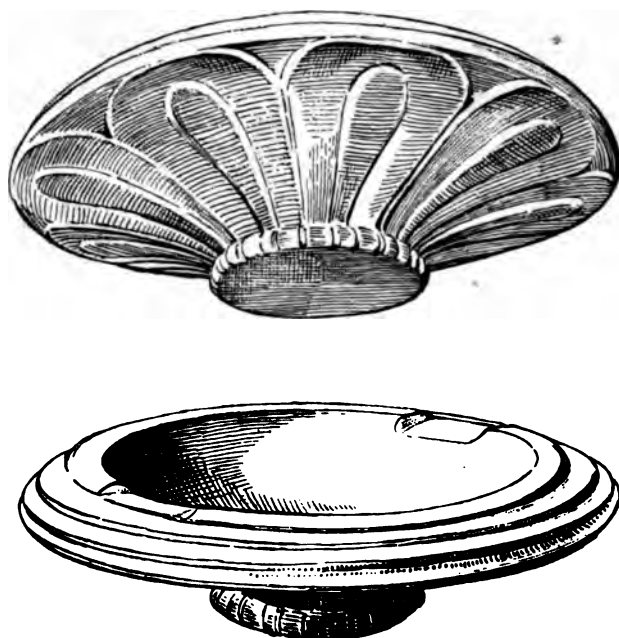
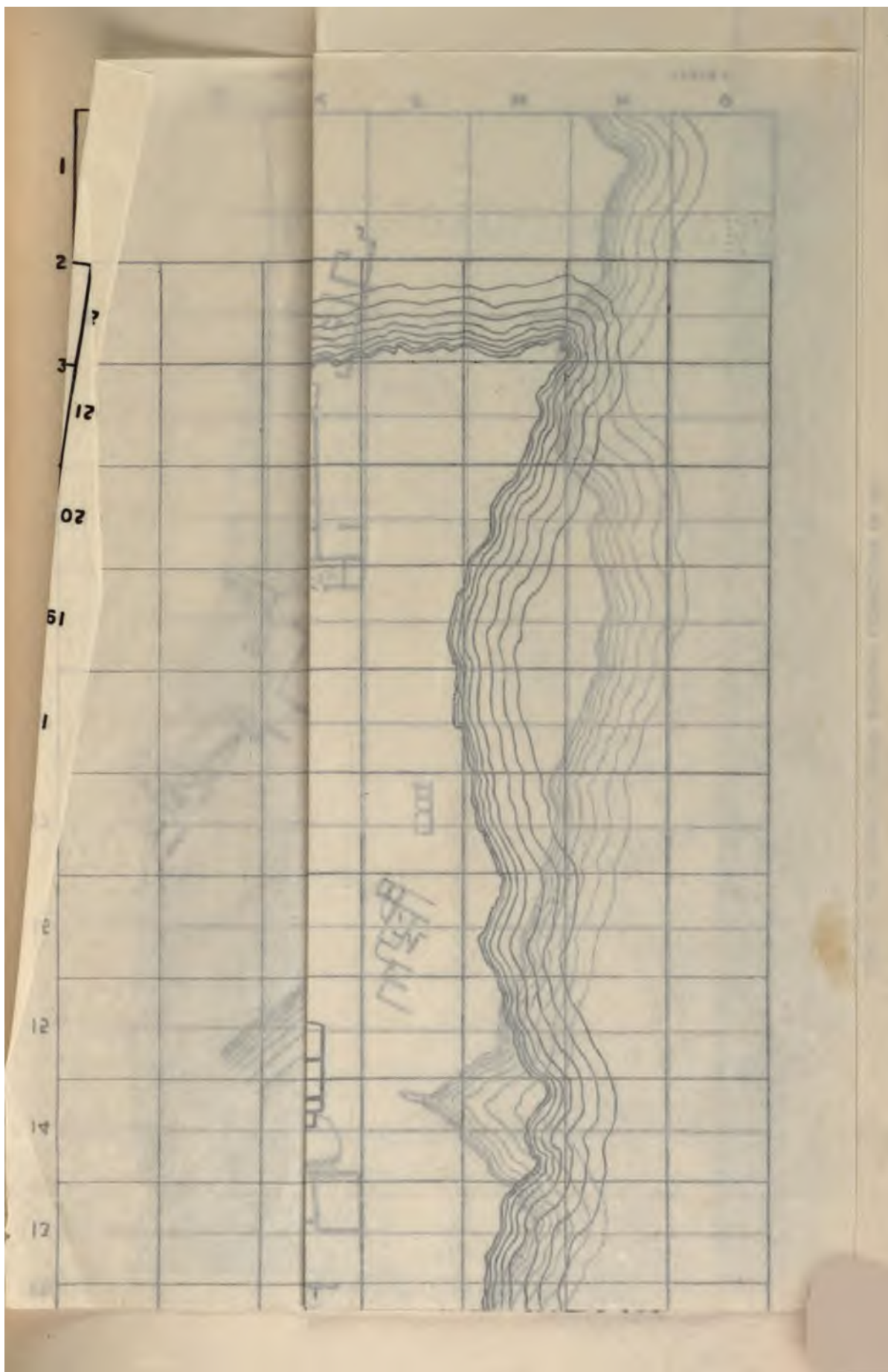


Fig. 19.

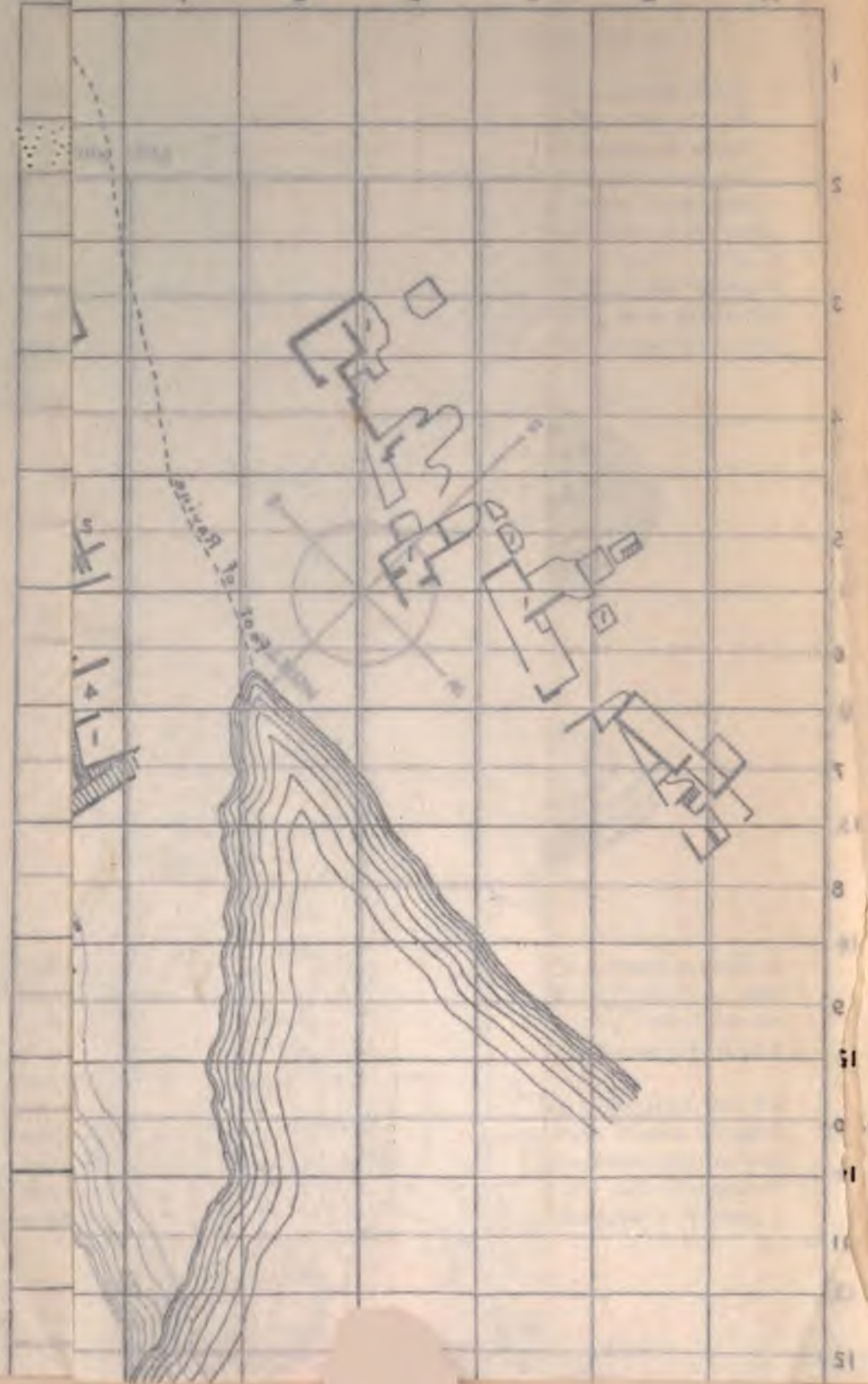
with the exception of the vase in Pl. VIII, this lamp is the best example of Minoan stone cutting found on the site. Although the vases were very numerous, it will be seen that they were confined to the very limited number of types shown in Fig. 15, which were picked out as the best examples of each variety.

Two knife pommels in marble and a gold riveted blade show that the weapons were on a par with the other possessions of these Minoan villagers, but the scarcity of bronze in comparison with Gournia indicates that the sack of Pseira was of a more thorough nature than was the case with its mainland neighbor.

RICHARD B. SEAGER.



A B C D E F





SKETCH SHOWING COVES AND SITE OF PSEIRA WITH THE COAST OF CRETE IN THE BACKGROUND.

Diagram illustrating the various stages of the development of the human eye.



FIG. 1. THE EYE OF AN INFANT.



VIEW OF THE TOWN OF PSEIRA SHOWING EXCAVATIONS OF 1907

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PSEIRA. FRAGMENTS OF A PAINTED RELIEF WITH OUTLINES PARTLY RESTORED

WELSH BORDERS



A



B



C

PSEIRA. A AND B MIDDLE MINOAN I CUPS. C LATE MINOAN I JUG

THE
SCHOOL
OF
THE
FUTURE



PSEIRA LATE MINOAN I VASE

SECRET



PSEIRA BRECCIA VASE.



PSEIRA TERRA COTTA BULL

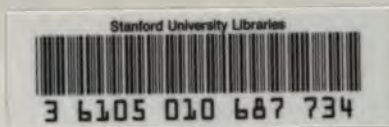
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